

Willow, a Redwall story

by Barefoot

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Summary: Another Redwall adventure. But what's this? A mouse shunning Redwall?

Willow, a Redwall story

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Holly ran fast, faster than she had ever ran before in her life. Clutching the small bundle in her arms, thoughts raced through her mind, "...not like this...please, not like this..." She could hear the voices behind her now, her heart pounded. The green habit clang to her legs in the soaking rain.

Suddenly, hope began to appear in her eyes; Redwall was only a few minutes away. Holly could see the spires of the Abby rising from the woods. Holly turned to see her pursuers right behind her. She tried to scream, but downpour filled her mouth. Holly began to pour the last of her strength into a final sprint, but a stray root stopped her. Holly saw blurry dark shadows appear from the trees behind her as she tumbled to the ground. She clutched the bundle close to her as a rat's face appeared above her. The rat raised a sword, and swung it down hard.

Mudfoot the rat, soldier of the Bloody Moss army, looked at the dead mouse at his feet. He smiled at the gore and began to walk back to the main army when he heard a mewling sound. Mudfoot turned back and picked up the bundle that lay in the mouse's arms. As he peeled back the cloth, he felt movement and was soon staring straight into the green eyes of a little otter not even a season old. Mudfoot wrapped the otter back up in the cloth and returned to the Bloody Moss encampment with the rest of his fellow troops.

Mudfoot saluted the sentry, Kilisparrow, and walked into a sea of tents. He headed for the biggest one and entered quickly. Inside he saw the cruelest rat he had ever known, Lukanan, commander of Bloody

Moss. Mudfoot saluted smartly.

"Mudfoot reporting from duty. We killed the mouse and found the little one."

Lukanan merely nodded, but then suddenly looked up and asked, "Let me see the otter," Mudfoot handed over the little otter and Lukanan stared into the green eyes, "I recognize your eyes, they have the same fear that your father had in his when I killed him. You won't remember that though. You won't remember anything. That annoying Redwall missionary mouse was the last witness."

Mudfoot watched this exchange, unsure about what to do. "Do you want me to kill the kid too, chief?"

"Of course not you fool!" raged Lukanan; "It would be much more fun to leave the otter here, where she is likely to be found by some Redwaller. Before we head west, leave the kid near the Abby, in the woods. Kid will always wonder where she's from." Lukanan laughed madly, and Mudfoot tried to join in, but his heart wasn't in it, he preferred killing to all these tricks.

A pair of blue eyes watched as the Bloody Moss army packed up and moved out. As darkness fell, nothing was left. From the shadows a small figure appeared, holding a sword that was much too large for her. When she walked into the clearing, the moonlight revealed her to be a young mouse, of only 5 seasons old, but her eyes glinted like steel. She was dressed in a loose tunic that was embroidered in an odd pattern of leaves. The mouse looked around, and her eyes were drawn to a bundle that was wrapped in cloths that looked much like her tunic. The mouse sprinted to the bundle and sighed in relief when she saw the baby otter. The otter gave a small cry.

"It's okay Jib," the mouse said, "it's gonna be okay now that Willow's here." The little mouse rocked Jib back and forth until she quieted down. "Come on Jib, we gotta get out of here. We can't go to the Redwallers, last time they tried to help us, look where it got us." Willow sighed, what could she do? Home was gone and no safe haven nearby. Her father told her if she was ever in trouble, go to Redwall. "But he died before Holly came, he doesn't know what the Redwallers are really like." Willow stood up, and began walking south. Her father was a warrior, and he taught his daughter as much as he could. Willow would teach Jib what she knew, and together they would find a way to live without their past destroying them.

6 seasons later...

The brothers and sisters of Redwall Abby gathered around their heroes, Gwyn, the Redwall warrior; Bucket, the muskrat; Skipper of otters; and Acadia, the squirrel. They were telling of their latest adventure, helping some moles down south fight off raiders. Skipper was speaking, and waving his paws around animatedly

"...so this huge rat comes over and raises his scimitar and slices downward towards me. Well, I thought I was toast, but these two.....but the rat tripped and I was able to avoid getting sliced in two." Skipper stopped talking and met Gwyn's gaze. Gwyn shrugged and looked over at Acadia pleadingly. Acadia rolled her eyes, but she got the hint.

"Okay, bedtime for dibbuns, we'll tell you the rest tomorrow." Groans came from the dibbuns, but it was very late and the stubborn ones soon quieted. As the last dibbun was carried upstairs, Abbot Palin cleared his throat.

"I take it there's more to this tale than you four want to share." The group nodded sheepishly. "I understand that something happened down there, and we're all grateful for what you did. I hope though, someday you'll be able to share what happened." With that, the last of the Redwallers cleared out, leaving behind the heroes.

Acadia sighed, "But we promised Willow we would never tell about them."

"Why can't we tell, it wouldn't do them any harm?" retorted Bucket.

"If we told," began Gwyn, "the Abbot would start asking questions about why they didn't come back with us. You do realize that if we were wearing our habits, Willow and Jib wouldn't have even thought about helping us."

"But it isn't Sister Holly's fault for what happened six seasons ago."

"It doesn't matter, we made a promise, we keep it."

"I agree with Gwyn."

"Me too, even though I don't like it. Bucket?"

"Fine, I agree too."

"Then it's settled, we never mention Willow or Jib's names again, we never speak of Bloody Moss again, and most of all, we never even think about what happened six seasons ago at the Greenbark settlement."

Eilan the mousemaid listened from the top of the stairs. She had caught the slip of the tongue that Skipper had made. So, someone named Willow and Jib saved the heroes, and now they couldn't talk about it. Eilan decided she had to know more about the mysterious saviors and this Greenbark place. She would leave for the south at midnight.

Silence's curtain fell over Mossflower as Eilan crept from the eastern door of Redwall. As soon as she was far enough from the Abby, she broke into a run knowing a search party would be after her at daybreak. She jogged over the familiar terrain for hours, taking care not to leave too much of a trail.

A bloody sun cast a crimson shadow over the land as Eilan stopped for breakfast.

Eilan mused to herself, "Red light at night, sailor's delight. Red light at morn', sailor's be warn'. Great, this means I'm in for a storm. And I don't even know where to find this Willow or Jib." Eilan thought for some more, than came to the conclusion she should ditch her habit, "â€|otherwise this Willow won't even approach me."

Only the bleeding sun saw Eilan walking southwards in merely an undertunic, while stormclouds of a titan size massed in north.

"What so you mean Eilan is missing!" cried out Abbot Palin who was pacing back and forth in the great hall. "Well, don't just stand there, Skipper! Form and send out search parties!" Palin sighed as Skipper raced off. Eilan was like a daughter to him; her own mother and father had died shortly after her birth from the summer fever. After that, Palin had adopted the mousemaid as his daughter. He had always cared for her, but this act of running off shocked Palin. Eilan was always such a levelheaded mouse. Alas, he could not figure it out. Palin shook his head sadly and looked outside where he saw rain beginning to fall.

"Oh Martin, Martin, what can I do?"

Eilan was in major trouble. She knew the storm was going to be bad, but not this bad. She was attempting to cross a river, taking a brief rest on a small island in the middle, when the skies opened up and the rivers began to rise.

So here she was, kilometers away from Redwall, on a small rock, stranded in a river.

"Okay Willow, now would be a good time to appear." But, nothing happened, except it began to rain even harder. Eilan sighed and looked at the water again. There was no way she was going to be able to cross those raging currents. Finally, she fell back to her last plan. She took a deep breath and began to scream.

"Heeeeeeeeeeeeeellllllllllllllllllllllllllllppppppppppppppppp
meeeeeeeee!"

A foreign voice broke her cry; "Oh shut your gabbing. We'll get you out of here."

Eilan looked over to the distant riverbank to see a brawny ottermaid and slender mousemaid. The otter slipped into the frothy waves and made her way gracefully through the tumultuous current. In no time the otter had climbed up onto the rock and turned to face the disbelief that Eilan stored in her face. Not even Skipper was that good of a swimmer!

"Greetings, I am Jib, my companion is Willow. Who are you and do you require assistance?" Jib looked at the shocked Eilan and smirked, "never mind, we can save introductions for later. Hold tight." Jib wrapped a rope around Eilan and secured it tightly. Then she turned, and dove back into the whitewater dragging an amazed mouse behind her.

Acadia sighed, she had be searching for Eilan now for over 4 hours with no luck. She dropped to the back of the party and pulled Gwyn over.

"Honestly Gwyn, why do you think she ran away?"

Gwyn was silent for a few moments, thinking hard. One possible reason kept running through his mind. Jealousy. He knew that Eilan was an extremely wise mouse, but everyone had limits. Acadia, Eilan, Bucket,

Skipper, and himself were always considered a team. They always worked together and were quite the pride of Redwall. There was nothing they couldn't accomplish together. However, when the moles came from the south, requesting the help of Redwall, Eilan wasn't around. So Acadia, Bucket, Skipper, and Gwyn went without her. They had been gone for nearly a season and when they came back with stories of courage and bravery, Eilan must have been upset that they didn't take her. But, Eilan isn't like that, Gwyn thought, I thought Eilan would just laugh it off and say next time she would play hero. Maybe something happened to Eilan while they were gone. Now that was a disturbing thoughtâ€¦

Acadia watched her friend, and saw the same doubts she had in her mind in Gwyn's. They both knew that Eilan was almost always easy-going.

"Gwyn, jealousy is possible, but could it be something else, could she have heard us last night talking? Could she have heard about Willow, Jib, Bloody Moss, and Greenbark?"

Gwyn was taken aback, he hadn't thought about that. He began to nod. Yes, Eilan could have eavesdropped on them. In fact, she probably did. Gwyn ran ahead through the downpour to Bucket and Skipper and told them what Acadia had thought.

Skipper spoke, "Well, if Eilan was eavesdropping, then that means it really limits our search."

All four looked south, each thinking what their new adventure would bring.

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